



(Photos by Pfc. Benjamin Gable 7th MPAD)

Staff Sgt. Brian Long, with Company A., 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division delivers a teddy bear to an Iraqi child in Baghdad's Mansour district April 15. (See story page 2)

Red Lion's assist with re-opening of secondary school

**By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1-1 Cav. Public Affairs**

BOOB AL SHAM, Iraq - Soldiers from the 1st "Red Lion" Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment assisted the city council here with the re-opening of the Boob Al Sham Girls Secondary School April 18 after a \$100,000 renovation on the school building.

On this first day of school since the renovation began a few months ago, nearly 600 students from ages 12 to 17 came back to the facility that now has freshly painted walls, ceilings, new light fixtures, new restrooms, fans, water fountains and repaired roofs.

The renovation is just one of many

projects the Boob Al Sham city council, Red Lion battalion Soldiers along with civilian contractors and civil affairs specialists from Co. A, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion have been bringing to fruition for the people here. Other projects for the town include improving electricity, a water treatment plant and improving sewage systems.

"When we talked to the city council and asked them what was the most important thing they wanted to do first as a project, they told us it was the education of their children," said Capt. Evan Gotkin, battery commander, Battery C, 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt, during a dedication ceremony on the

school's basketball court. "They wanted to ensure their children had a clean, safe and well-built building before pursuing other projects like electricity, water and sewage."

"They realized that Iraq does not have a bright future unless its children are educated," added Gotkin, who hails from Long Island, N.Y. "This is a celebration of the city council who made this decision possible for your future and the future of Iraq."

Throughout the morning, Soldiers handed out school supplies to the children. They also donated and put together

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Stryker troops continue search, clearing operations

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable
7th MPAD

CAMP STYKER, Iraq - U.S. and Iraqi Army troops moved in to the eastern part of Baghdad's Mansour district to work on a mission to provide security to locals and search for illegal weapons.

Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, from Ft. Lewis, Wash., were tasked with the deliberate clearance of homes in this area, neutralizing weapons caches and performing targeted raids.

"These clearing operations are to enforce the security of the neighborhood and the people living here," said Staff Sgt. Brian Long, a native of Burns, Wyo., with Co. A. "We make sure we do a complete sweep of the area and gather as much information as possible."

During their search for weapons and explosives, the troops handed out flyers, tip



(Photo by Pfc. Benjamin Gable 7th MPAD)

Spc. Robert Kern, with Co. A., 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf. Regt., 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div., from Fort Lewis, Wash., uses a battering ram to force his way through a locked door in a home in Baghdad's Mansour district April 15.

cards with numbers to the local joint security stations and head of household forms.

Teams of Soldiers moved through each house on their designated blocks and methodically searched every room.

"Insurgents have been known to hide things all over houses and in the smallest crevices and cracks you can imagine," said Pfc. Derek Gress,

with Co. A. "We have to do whatever is needed to make sure they don't have something they're not supposed to."

After several hours of searching and clearing, the coalition forces headed back to their respective bases to rest and start over again the next day.

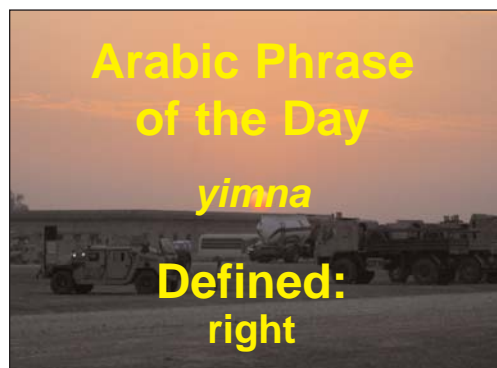
The morning of April 15, coalition forces moved back to the same area as the day before.




Many of the houses had locks on the doors. With the homeowners having migrated, Soldiers were forced to bring out the lock cutters and the battering ram to enter the homes. One local reported to Soldiers that most of the homeowners had moved to Syria for more safety and better job opportunities.

After leaving the houses, coalition forces left damage assessment sheets and new locks for the owners of the homes, should they return.

Toward the end of the day's search, coalition forces discovered a large cache of ammunition and explosive chemicals. In this particular find, they discovered two large cans of nitric acid, five 40-pound bags of an unknown white powder substance and a stripped down car.

With the day's mission complete, and after the long hours moving from house to house on consecutive days, the Soldiers of Co. A., headed back to their Strykers and heard two words they love to hear- "Drop ramp."



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report			
	Today	Tomorrow	Saturday
High: 90 Low: 68	High: 90 Low: 66	High: 91 Low: 66	

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Baghdad in Brief

Great American Country TV needs you for song dedications

BAGHDAD - MND-B Soldiers are invited to record song dedications for Great American Country television at the MND-B Media Operations Center April 27 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The dedications are to be aired on GAC during Memorial Day weekend.

No appointments necessary, Soldiers interested need only to show up at the MOC, located in building 17-2 outside of the Division headquarters, to dedicate their song of choice to their loved ones.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Soldiers from Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment and Company A, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion set up a swing set in a school yard during the re-opening of the Boob Al Sham Girls Secondary School April 18 in Boob Al Sham, Iraq.

Renovation brings smiles to first day of school

School

From Page 1

er a swing set in the school's recess yard for the younger children to enjoy.

"We're celebrating a small victory over terrorism by providing a good place for kids to be educated," said Idaho Falls, Idaho native 1st Lt. Burke Manwaring, a platoon leader for Battery C, 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt. "This is a great way for the public and the coalition to interact and see each other on a personal level to build relationships and trust."

"This is an opportunity for us to show encouragement to the kids, and we're here to let the people know that we're not here to terrorize them, we're here to help them help themselves," said Chaplain (Capt.) Tom Strong, the 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt. chaplain. "One of the things we're starting to see here is Sunni and Shia working together to reinvest their own money in their communities."

Many of the school supplies given to the children in Boob Al

Sham, were donated through Operation Lion's Castle, which was established by the 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt. chaplain's office in August to collect donations of clothes, school supplies, shoes and toys among other items to give to people in Iraq. The donations were made by the families and friends of Soldiers currently serving in Iraq.

"There are a lot of generous donors out there in the states who care about what's going on here and about the Iraqi people, so there are a lot of good things going on," added Strong.

In order for projects like the school to continue moving forward, villagers in the town, which has had its share of insurgent activity, have been working closely with Iraqi security forces and coalition forces to kick insurgents out of their neighborhoods.

Slowly but surely things in the village have been improving, according to Gotkin.

"Once people began being intimidated and threatened, the sheiks were angered (by the insurgents) and called a meeting with the Iraqi security forces

and coalition forces and said, 'We want security,'" said Gotkin. "There is now a wedge between the local populace and the insurgents."

In response to the demands of the local citizens, the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police have now set up 24-hour checkpoints in the area.

**OPERATION IRAQI
FREEDOM**

BALLISTIC PROTECTION
THE SOLDIER SURVIVED

BATTLE PROVEN

STAY ALERT --- STAY ALIVE

The soldier wearing this plate was shot several times. Two bullets hit the plate causing a bulge on the inside, however, there was no penetration.

Leadership recognizes Purple Heart recipients, volunteers

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cav. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - Each month, the 1st Cavalry Division leadership recognizes those Soldiers who have come home from Iraq due to injuries sustained in combat operations and volunteers who have made a difference in the lives of the Soldiers and family members at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center.

April 24 was no exception. With 22 Purple Heart recipients and 30 volunteers, the ceremony seemed to touch everyone in the room.

"Robert F. Kennedy was once credited with a quotation that I feel is applicable to this great ceremony that we're doing today. He said 'The history will judge you, and as the years pass you will ultimately judge yourself in the extent to which you have used your gifts and talents to lighten and enrich the lives of your fellow men. In your hands lays the fulfillment of the world and the best qualities of your own spirit,'" said Col. Larry Phelps, the 1st Cavalry Division (rear) commander, during the open remarks for the ceremony.

In attendance for the ceremony was Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Don Jones, the president of the Central Texas Chapter for the Association for the United States Army, who was honored to be chosen to pin the Purple Heart Awards on the recovering Cavalry troopers.

"As I was pinning the Purple Heart awards on those young men standing before me today, I realized that each of them serves as a beacon to other Americans and a reminder of the sacrifices they have made to ensure that we have the freedoms and the form of democracy that we enjoy in this country," he said when he addressed the audience after pinning on 22 Purple Hearts.

Along with the Purple Heart recipients, 30 volunteers were recognized for their selfless service to their units, families and communities.

"The volunteers this month are



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

Spc. Lucas Goedert, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, receives his Purple Heart from Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Don Jones, president of the Central Texas Chapter of the Association for the United States Army, during a ceremony at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center April 24.

being and thanked for their many hours of service to others," said Wendy Fil, the wife of the division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. "When I read about these selfless servants I was reminded of a quote which states, 'Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest bit of caring; all of which have the potential to turn a life around.'"

As Phelps addressed those in attendance, he explained the importance of the day's ceremony.

"Today, we gather here in this great place to honor a variety of different

types of service. The service of Soldiers to their fellow troopers, placing themselves in harm's way for their buddies, for their unit, for their mission and for their nation," Phelps said. "We also honor the service of our great volunteers who consistently put the needs of others above their own, enriching their (Family Readiness Groups), their units and their communities."

Speaking to the Purple Heart recipients at the ceremony's conclusion, Fil told the Soldiers, "You are our nation's heroes and you are great Americans. We are humbled and grateful today in this room to be here to witness you receiving the Purple Heart."

Red Cross bridging distance between Soldiers, families

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Communication can be a challenge while deployed, especially when a Soldier is living in a newly-established joint security station or combat outpost.

But there is a solution; the American Red Cross is a bridge between families and troops.

"When a birth, death or illness occurs or when a family requests financial help or a health and welfare contact, they can contact their nearest Red Cross chapter to be put in touch with a military caseworker," said Susanne Harlandt, a Red Cross assistant station manager here.

When they contact the Red Cross they need to be prepared to provide them with the service member's name, rank, social security number and unit both at home and deployed. According to Harlandt, who has been working with the Red Cross for six years, the ideal address would include the company, battalion, brigade, and division.

On the other side, commanders need to ensure that the Red Cross has the correct contact information for their unit, she said.

"When new units arrive, it is imperative that Red Cross is kept informed. Also it is (essential that the office) is given the unit designations and all contact numbers, for both day and night, so that we can deliver their messages as soon as we receive them," said Harlandt who deployed to Iraq from Kaiserslautern, Germany.

"I have to tell you that we have become very good detectives, and have had major success in locating personnel, whose messages arrived with their military address being: 'Somewhere in Iraq,' Harlandt said. "Yes, we can



(Courtesy photo)

Suzanne Sigurdsson, Sharron Gilkey, Susanne Harlandt sit on a throne for a group photo at the Multi-National Corps - Iraq headquarters building at Camp Victory, Iraq.

ultimately service even those, but precious time is lost, and sometimes that time can be the difference of making it back home in time or not."

"One fact that most service members do not realize, is that they do not have to wait for a message to arrive from home," Harlandt said. "In this day and age, where e-mail and the dissemination of news are faster than light, they often are aware of a situation before the command informs them."

This makes the process faster if the Soldier is planning on leaving the theater on emergency leave. Though the Red Cross does not make decisions about whether a Soldier can take emergency leave, the message itself is often used in the decision making process.

One common message, that isn't necessarily an emergency, is about the birth of a child. But when the Soldier is the father, the Red Cross can help with syncing the Soldiers leave with the event.

"If the couple is trying to arrange the Soldiers R&R leave to coincide with the baby's birth, we do send pre-birth messages that

have a complete Doctor's Interpretive Statement," she said. "That is the diagnosis, prognosis, current condition, life expectancy, and the doctor's recommendation for presence. (The DIS should) give the command and Soldier all the info they need to make the leave arrangements."

The Red Cross doesn't just deal with medical incidents. Family members can also request a "health and welfare contact."

"H&Ws typically come from family members who are concerned for the safety of their loved ones," she said.

"It may stem from a lengthy, out of the ordinary, absence of contact from the Soldier, or from a need to re-establish communications after an extremely long lapse of silence."

Harlandt said frequently H&W will be generated due to an unofficial notice from theater about an accident or injury.

"We do remind units that, if they prefer not to get so many H&Ws, all they have to do is encourage their Soldiers to contact home periodically - if nothing else, just to let family know they are alive and well," she

said.

Most messages end with Soldier contacting their family. The Red Cross also delivers emergency messages to Department of Defense contractors and civilians deployed in the theater as well.

Training for leadership is also available.

"We like to present briefs to commands that may not be completely versed in the message process," she said. "Many of our briefs are presented in a sidewalk situation. For example, I went to get some coffee the other day, and two KBR (Kellogg, Brown and Root) employees stopped me and asked me to explain the message process as it relates to them."

Harlandt said she doesn't mind those chance encounters. The Camp Liberty office conducts 24-hour operations and the three women running the shop, who call themselves "S3," since their first names all begin with the letter 'S.'

"We are on duty 24/7," she said. "In fact, when we are off shift, we must still wear Red Cross attire like T-shirts and jackets that indicate who we are. The visibility in common areas like the (Post Exchange) allow service members to stop us any time, any place for help, or to just talk. Many of them do just that."

The local team consisting of Harlandt; team leader Sharron Gilkey, from Fort Hood, Texas; and Suzanne Sigurdsson, a Red Cross reservist from Iceland, is located on Camp Liberty in Building E-23 A, in the Headquarters, Headquarters Company of the 1169th Engineers Battalion. They can be contacted at 242-7332. There are also four other Red Cross stations in the stations in the Central Command area of operation -- in Balad, Tikrit, Kuwait and Bagram, Afghanistan.